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Notes and Opinions.

Scientific Harmonies.—The *Expository Times*, in an interesting and characteristic review of Professor Blass' new book on Luke, calls attention to the fact that Professor Blass disclaims all intentions of producing a harmony of the gospels, maintaining that almost all, if not all, harmonies are unscientific. However much one may agree with its stricture upon this disclaimer of Professor Blass, it is beyond doubt that both in the Old and in the New Testament there is abundance of room for harmonies based upon some sort of scientific principles. Such harmonies should not merely print the texts which are supposed to dovetail into each other, and endeavor by fair means or foul to make recalcitrant parallel passages agree. It should seek as far as possible to work from the sources of the accounts as they now stand. There is, of course, abundance of room and need for harmonies which shall print the documents as they now are for the purpose of aiding further investigation, but neither in the historical books of the Old Testament nor in the gospels is it possible to construct a final harmony until the critical relationship of the parallel accounts is established. It would seem as if the work of criticism had produced sufficient results to warrant an attempt in both lines, for, although it may be that a really final harmony of Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, and the prophetic books on the one hand, and the gospels on the other, will never be written, an attempt at reducing their material to some sort of order under the guidance to a rational critical position is one which must certainly come in the near future.

The Attitude of Theological Teachers toward Old Testament Criticism.
—Professor B. B. Warfield, in a review of the new Dictionary of the Bible in the *Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, maintains that the great mass of American Old Testament scholars is thoroughly conservative and implies that the editor of the dictionary, in choosing his writers upon Old Testament subjects, has hardly represented the true spirit of Old Testament scholarship in this country. An even more decided protest is made in the review of the dictionary in the *Bibliotheca Sacra*. While it might likely be that a census of our representative theological seminaries would show results hardly in keeping with these opinions, it is worthy of notice that in Germany, where the con-

servative biblical scholarship has been more active and aggressive than usual within the last year or two, the defenders of the traditional views on the literary and historical problems of the Old Testament to a man are found in the ranks of the ministry and not in the university circles. While there is perhaps only one among the New Testament specialists at the universities, namely Nösgen, of Rostock, who can with some show of right and justice be claimed as representative of the traditional views of inspiration, there is not one, not even König, who, in the Old Testament department, defends such views in reference to the Old. On the other hand, the rank and file of the ministry has come to the rescue of the old positions, and the number of defenders is evidently on the increase. In addition to Zahn, Rupprecht, Naumann, and others, the name of J. Stosch, a Berlin pastor, can be mentioned, who has begun the publication of a series of *Alttestamentliche Studien*, small volumes of about 200 pages each, which appear from the establishment of that veteran conservative house, Bertelsmann, of Gütersloh. The object of the series is, in a semi-popular but yet scientific manner, positively and without special direct polemics against the current criticisms of the day, to defend the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. The first two parts were devoted to Genesis and Exodus, and the last part to appear, the third, entitled "Vom Sinai zum Nebo," is devoted to the last three books of the group. The author is exceedingly conservative, practically making no concessions to the newer teachings.

"The Retarded Growth of the Sunday School."—Dr. W. S. Dike, in the *Sunday School Times* for July 9, 1898, has given some exceedingly significant figures in regard to the growth of the Sunday school. In the course of his investigations he has discovered that, while the Sunday schools have gained regularly when the record is made to run over a number of years, recently the rate of growth has been less than the rate of increase in church membership. Thus, in the Congregational denomination Sunday schools have increased 32 per cent. and the church membership 41 per cent. between 1886 and 1896, while in 1897 the Congregational Sunday schools show an actual loss of 1,871, while the church membership shows a gain of 1,669. In the Protestant Episcopal church, during the same decade, the Sunday schools increased 28 per cent. and the church membership 53 per cent. The Presbyterian Sunday schools show a gain of 35.3 per cent. and the church membership 46.5 per cent. The Methodist Episcopal, a gain of 44 per cent. in the Sunday schools and 49.8 per cent. in the church membership. The Baptists, as a denomination, show an increase of 57 per

cent. in their Sunday schools and in their church membership 40 per cent. The most gains, however, in the Sunday schools are in the South, while in the North the percentage of increase in the Sunday school membership is lower than that of church membership. Dr. Dike maintains, therefore, that the Sunday school in the United States is apparently in a condition of relatively retarded growth, especially in those parts of the country in which it is the strongest and most favorably received. For some reason or other the Christian bodies best known for their intelligence, and those in the more intelligent communities, are apparently making less use of the Sunday school than formerly in enlarging their resources from which they secure their membership. He does not, however, attempt to say whether this justifies the statement that the Sunday school is decadent.

The editor of the *Sunday School Times*, in a note upon Dr. Dike's article, criticises its title, and affirms that the growth is retarded relatively only to the increase in the membership of churches. So far from this indicating decadence on the part of the Sunday school, it shows that the institution is performing its legitimate work in causing such an increase in the addition to the church.

The statistics adduced by Dr. Dike are worthy of most serious attention. While it is true that the Sunday school has a legitimate function in causing a large increase in church membership, the fact that its own increase is not proportionate to the increase of the church is hardly to be excused by that consideration. As the church grows, should its members drop from the Sunday school? The fact seems to be that among many intelligent Christians there is a growing fear lest much of the instruction given in Sunday schools is injurious to the young, and unworthy of the sober consideration of those of maturer years. So long as the teaching in the Sunday school is regarded as a matter for any person who has Christian zeal, so long will the instruction given be crude and one-sided. It is too often the case that those who have once become members of the church consider it no longer necessary to study the teaching of the Scriptures, and to a considerable degree the grounds for such a belief are to be laid at the door of the Sunday school itself. Until more careful attention is given to the problem of teachers, and a more rational attempt is made to instruct, it is to be feared that the Sunday school will be increasingly less attractive to maturing young men and women. There is no good reason why the membership in the Sunday school should not increase even more rapidly than that of the church.